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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5957
INFO RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 9380
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1849
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SIPDIS

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HHS FOR OGHA - COURY
DEPT FOR OEC/IHA
CAIRO FOR ESTH
AMMAN FOR ESTH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SCUL](#) [CASC](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF HEALTH WARNS OF AN OUTBREAK OF MEASLES

¶1. (U) Summary. Israel's Ministry of Health has sent out a warning about an outbreak of measles in the country. Since last summer when a British tourist traveling to Israel for a wedding in an ultra-orthodox (Haredi) community in Jerusalem came down with measles, more than 900 cases of measles have been recorded in Israel. In 2005 only one case was reported, and in 2006 eleven were reported.

¶2. (U) Since the beginning of the present outbreak in September 2007, the MOH has been notified regarding more than 900 cases of measles. Most of these cases were not immunized, and about 700 of them are concentrated in Jerusalem and Beit Shemesh. In the MOH sub-district of Lod, Ramle, and Modiin, there are 50 cases.

¶3. (U) Due to the infection of a practicing physician and a nurse, the MOH has recommended that all health workers be vaccinated, and plans to start next week in the areas of highest infection. The MOH anticipates that several thousand health care workers will be vaccinated against measles.

¶4. (U) There is growing concern about the measles outbreak, particularly among the Haredi community. In 2003-04 there were two outbreaks in the Jewish ultra-orthodox communities in Jerusalem, with a total of 224 cases. Among these cases nearly 92 per cent were not vaccinated. Because of ultra-Orthodox beliefs, many refused to cooperate with GOI institutions following the establishment of the State of Israel. This included the National Insurance Institute, the Histadrut (National Labor Union) health maintenance organization that includes well-baby clinics. In recent decades, the ultra-Orthodox boycott of such state institutions has weakened, and today even some ultra-orthodox followers have become ardent HMO members and most of them even vaccinate their children. However, pockets of resistance to vaccinations remain in very conservative Jewish communities in Jerusalem. In these communities, some schools have begun to allow the Israel Association for Public Health Services (a private provider) to vaccinate their pupils. This was permitted because letters that were sent home to parents announcing vaccination opportunities did not bear the MOH logo, inoculations were administered by nurses of the same gender as patients to respect cultural sensitivities, and there were guarantees made that the inoculated children's names would not be passed on to the MOH.

¶5. (U) In spite of high national immunization coverage (94-95%) in Israel, programs to increase and maintain immunization coverage are essential, and the MOH realizes the need to focus on specific sub-populations whose immunization rates are low.

JONES